UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1996/819
30 September 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL PURSUANT TO SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1058 (1996)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1058 of 30 May 1996, in paragraph 4 of which the Council requested the Secretary-General to keep it regularly informed of any developments on the ground and of other circumstances affecting the mandate of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP). In the resolution the Council further requested the Secretary-General to review the composition, strength and mandate of UNPREDEP and to report to it by 30 September 1996.

2. It will be recalled that in its resolution 1058 (1996), the Security Council had reaffirmed its commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and, recognizing that it was too early to be confident that stability had been established in the region, decided to extend the mandate of UNPREDEP for a period terminating on 30 November. The present report should be read in conjunction with my previous reports, particularly those of 23 November 1995 (S/1995/987), 30 January 1996 (S/1996/65) and 23 and 29 May 1996 (S/1996/373 and Add.1).

II. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

3. Peace and stability in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia still largely depend on the situation in the region. The most significant recent development in this regard has been the elections for the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and higher-level bodies, which were held under Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) auspices on 14 September 1996. These elections represent an important milestone in the implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, marking the beginning of a new phase in the international community's effort to restore stability to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to the region as a whole. It is, however, evident that the sustained presence of the international community will be required in

order to ensure that the gains achieved over the past year consolidate the foundation for lasting peace and stability, both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the region as a whole. It is in this context that the role of UNPREDEP must be considered.

4. Since my report to the Security Council last May (S/1996/373), bilateral relations between the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and its neighbours have continued to improve. The country is also upgrading its defence capabilities by signing a number of bilateral military cooperation agreements with countries outside the region.

5. Despite a number of positive factors on the domestic scene, which I described in my last report, inter-ethnic tensions continue to pose a threat to the country's social fabric, its integration and its long-term stability. A new and disturbing rise in such tensions has been generated by the ethnic Albanians' insistence upon, and the Government's consistent refusal to recognize as legal, the establishment and functioning of the Albanian-language "Tetovo University". The situation has been further aggravated by the imprisonment of some of the organizers of the University. The over-politicization of the issue on both sides has added to its complexity. Internal political, ethnic and social tensions are also bound to be exacerbated for some time by the state of the country's economy.

6. My Special Representative, in carrying out the good offices functions referred to in paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 908 (1994) of 31 March 1994, undertakes activities aimed at contributing to the maintenance of peace and stability in the country. These activities include, inter alia, efforts to reduce the level of mistrust among the political and ethnic actors and the promotion of dialogue on questions of human rights involving ethnic communities and national minorities. In keeping with the Council's presidential statement of 22 February 1995 (S/PRST/1995/9), the UNPREDEP Mission, within its limited resources, also provides some humanitarian assistance aimed at consolidating recent gains as well as supporting national capacity-building and strengthening governmental structures. These functions are carried out in liaison with several United Nations organizations and agencies as well as with local and international non-governmental organizations.

III. COMPOSITION, STRENGTH AND MANDATE OF UNPREDEP

A. Mandate

7. The mandate of UNPREDEP is fully described in my previous reports to the Council and is derived from Security Council resolutions 795 (1992) of 11 December 1992, 842 (1993) of 18 June 1993 and 908 (1994) and the presidential statement of 22 February 1995 (S/PRST/1995/9).

B. Composition and troop strength

8. The military component of UNPREDEP consists of two mechanized infantry battalions: a 500-strong Nordic composite battalion (with troops from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) and a 500-strong United States Army task force, both supported by a heavy engineering platoon from Indonesia. The authorized military strength is 1,050 troops and 35 United Nations military observers. There are 26 civilian police monitors, and civilian personnel number 168. The international military and civilian personnel come from 49 countries.

C. Troop deployment

9. UNPREDEP has 21 observation posts (OPs) along the northern and western borders of the country. Eleven are manned by the Nordic Battalion and 10 by the United States Battalion. The Indonesian Engineering Platoon provides support to the two battalions through the construction of roads and repair of main supply routes to the OPs. United Nations Military Observers (UNMOs) observe, monitor and report on developments along the country's northern and western borders, and also patrol communities within their area of responsibility.

10. The current strength and composition of the Force provides the most effective and optimal coverage of the adverse terrain along the borders throughout the year. It also provides a reserve capacity to perform a wide range of functions including, inter alia, daily foot patrols and the manning of temporary observation posts; maintaining a self-defence capability for the OPs; holding in reserve a quick reaction force capable of handling emergencies in a timely manner; monitoring the United Nations Patrol Line; conducting cross-border meetings, border/community patrols, and, if necessary, demonstrating a 'show of force'; preserving logistical self-sufficiency for lengthy periods at the OPs, which is necessary because of adverse terrain and/or weather conditions; preparing to withdraw forces on short notice should the situation so require; and providing support for humanitarian action, as required.

IV. REVIEW OF THE STRENGTH AND MANDATE OF UNPREDEP

11. Regarding the request made by the Security Council in paragraph 4 of its resolution 1058 (1996), I have concluded that, at the present time, only two months before the expiration of the current UNPREDEP mandate, it is neither appropriate nor necessary to recommend a change in the mandate. The remaining question relates to the composition and strength of the force needed to carry out the current mandate. In this connection, I asked my Special Representative, the Force Commander and my military advisers to explore a number of options for a possible reconfiguration of UNPREDEP.

12. Of the options they considered, the least disruptive would be to revert to the infantry strength originally recommended in 1992 (S/24923), i.e., 700 all ranks (plus 50 engineers, since UNPREDEP cannot call upon engineering assets from elsewhere in the theatre). This option would entail a somewhat less comprehensive coverage of the border, a reduction of manned OPs from 21 to 16,

considerably reduced observation and reporting along the western border, a more limited reserve capacity, and an increased reliance on helicopter assets for logistical support. However, the implementation of this option would result in insignificant savings and would seriously impair UNPREDEP's ability to carry out the monitoring of the Republic's western and northern borders, one of its core functions. Given the current fluid circumstances in the country and the region, I am not inclined at this stage to recommend such a change.

13. It is the unanimous view of my Special Representative, the Force Commander and my military advisers that any reduction in troops would have a negative impact on the implementation of the mandate and weaken the capacity of the international community to assess and respond to potential threats confronting the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Any formula that allowed for a reduction in the Force would entail a scaling back of its functions in one way or another.

14. I accordingly conclude that the answer to the question initially posed in paragraph 43 of my report of 23 May 1996 (S/1996/373) is that the most effective strength and configuration of the military component of UNPREDEP is that currently authorized, and that the current mandate of UNPREDEP could not be adequately implemented with fewer resources.

V. OBSERVATIONS

15. My earlier assessments of the positive role of UNPREDEP in promoting peace and stability, both in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and in the region as a whole, remain unchanged. The compelling arguments relating to the still uncertain situation in the wider region that led the Security Council to extend the mandate of the Force for a period terminating 30 November 1996 are still valid. In a letter addressed to me on 6 August 1996, the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia also expressed the view that the overall situation in the region had not changed to an extent that would allow the successful conclusion of UNPREDEP's mission. It also reiterated its previous arguments in support of an extension of the UNPREDEP mandate for another six months beyond 30 November 1996. I met President Gligorov on 25 September and we reviewed the overall situation in the region. The President was most grateful to the United Nations for the priority which had been accorded to his country. He stressed the importance of preventive action and noted that UNPREDEP represented the first successful example of preventive deployment. In considering the future of UNPREDEP, the views of the Government will, of course, be given the most serious consideration.

16. Before the current mandate ends, I will present to the Security Council my recommendations regarding the future of UNPREDEP, including its mandate and the strength and composition of the Force required to implement it. My recommendation will be based on an evaluation of the general situation in the region and on an assessment of the specific threats which continue to endanger the peace and stability of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.